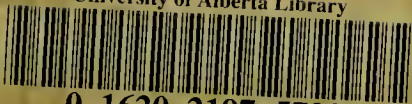


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The **BLUE JAY**



OFFICIAL BULLETIN
of the
YORKTON NATURAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

In Co-operation with
The Saskatchewan Provincial Museum

V - 344

THE BLUF JAY

The official organ of the Yorkton Natural History Society continued in loving memory of the founder, our first President and Editor, the late Isabel M. Priestly.

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Lloyd T. Carmichael, Regina, Botany
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OUR FLORAL EMBLEM

(an editorial from the Regina Leader Post)

It would be a matter of deep regret if Saskatchewan should find itself in the embarrassing position of having an official floral emblem which cannot be found in the province. Yet this possibility apparently exists. For, while there is a profusion of these flowers - the prairie lilies - today, overplucking may result in their disappearance. The disappearance of this tall, beautiful, orange-red flower of the wayside, and meadows, would be generally deplored.

Naturalists are concerned over the future of the lily, adopted as the provincial floral emblem by the legislature in 1941, and known botanically as "lilium philadelphicum andinum." They report that, although Saskatchewan has an exceptionally fine crop of these lilies this summer, due to the wet spring and abundant rainfall, there is danger of the plant disappearing as the flowers are being picked indiscriminately and often torn up by the roots.

It is pointed out that because the plant in blossom time puts all its strength into producing its flower and seed pod, the bulbs and roots lose their strength during this period. Therefore this strength must be built up again before the end of the season. This can only be done by use of the stalk and leaves.

If the plant is plucked, the loss of the stock and leaves means that the bulb and roots may die or take years before they grow again...

In some countries, to destroy the official emblem is a violation of the law. In many of the parks also there are regulations forbidding the picking of rare flowers. Offenders can be prosecuted. The Act passed by the Saskatchewan legislature in 1941 designating the prairie lily as our official floral emblem, includes no such provisions. If the situation is really as serious as naturalists suggest, it might be in order to reword it, providing for action against those who pick the flower indiscriminately.

BIRD LIFE IN THE YORKTON DISTRICT IN THE 1890's

Through the courtesy of B. W. Cartwright, Chief Naturalist, Ducks Unlimited, we received a most interesting article by R. P. Rooke, formerly of Yorkton, now of Winnipeg, on his experiences with bird life in the Yorkton District in the 1890's. Extracts from Mr. Rooke's notes, as copied below, we believe will be of much interest to readers of the Blue Jay.

In the early spring of 1890 we settled on homesteads in the Rothbury district, 15 miles from Saltcoats. The settlement was in the rolling park-like country, about 20 miles west of the valley of the Assiniboine, on the east side of which were the densely wooded hills of the Duck and Riding Mountains. This area, (no doubt due to it) being contiguous to the Assiniboine Valley, it was one of the main migratory routes of the northern birds, and when standing on a high ridge on a fine morning in spring, it would sometimes appear that the sky was full of the flocks winging their way northward.

Of the larger birds, the Canada Goose came first, but were usually in small flocks when they arrived, as many of them nested in this area, but a week or two later, innumerable flocks of the smaller geese, Wavies, Blues, etc., would pass over. On a sunny day, the gleaming white wings of Pelicans, Whistling Swans, and Whooping Cranes could be seen gleaming in the sun, high in the sky, with, at lower altitudes, flocks of Sandhill Cranes, Cormorants and others.

It was rarely on a spring morning that the loud rattling cry of the Sandhill Cranes could not be heard in one direction or another, as many of the flocks came down to feed on the sandy ridges, and where there were permanent marshes, many pair nested.

Among the game birds which nested and were very plentiful in our vicinity were the Sharp-tailed and Ruffed Grouse. The Pinnated Grouse were not known until about 1905 and were then known as the "Manitoba" Prairie Chicken, as they arrived via that province.

Around the north and east sides of our settlement there was a belt of heavy white and black poplar bush about six miles long and three to four miles wide. In this area were many wild hay meadows with reedy patches in the centre, where marsh birds such as Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Tern, Coots, Grebe, Rails and some of the waders nested. In the bush were many fire-killed poplar trees and stumps in which Woodpeckers, Swallows, Bluebirds, etc., nested and in the taller trees the large hawks; such as the Red-tailed and Rough-legged had their dwellings.

Among the birds that were rare at the time, but are more plentiful now, were the Mourning Dove, Bluebird and Canvas-back duck, etc.

With intensive settlement, many species which were plentiful in the area in question have disappeared, owing to their nesting and feeding grounds being cultivated, and the droughts of the 1930's drying up the small lakes and marshes, but it is still, I believe, a well populated bird area.

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In January, 1893, I went to work on a horse ranch 20 miles west of Yorkton. About two miles south of the ranch, there was a depression in the prairie which we called the "ravine." It was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and 200 yards wide at the bottom. There was no stream in it, but at several places some hundreds of yards apart, there were springs that welled up through low, muskegy hillocks. Around each of these marshes, formed by the springs, grew a wide belt of bulrushes and reeds. This was the only place I knew of where the Sandhill Crane nested in numbers, and on one occasion when I made a fairly thorough search, I found 10 nests, each with two eggs.

BIRD BANDING NOTES

C. Stuart Houston, Yorkton bird bander, reports two returns this year of birds banded in 1946. A Chipping Sparrow, banded June 10, 1946, was retrapped June 30, 1947, while a Robin, banded May 10, 1946, was found dead in the yard where banded, July 8, 1947. At Nipawin, M. G. Street had returns of the same species; a Chipping Sparrow, banded June 24, 1945, was retaken May 22, 1946, and again this year on May 28. The Robin, banded June 28, 1946, returned to the same trap May 11, 1947. Street also had an interesting recovery of a Common Redpoll which was banded at Nipawin, Sask., March 8, 1946. This small bird was shot at Bluevale, Ontario, some 40 miles from London, Ont., on February 14, 1947. Another Common Redpoll, also banded March 8, 1946, returned March 20, 1947 to the same trap where it was banded.

DISASTERS TO BIRD LIFE

Mr. Dick Bird F.Z.S. of Regina who through the medium of inspiring movies and lectures, is probably doing more in the cause of conservation education than any other person in the province, reports several disasters to bird life in the province.

One of these occurred early in July, on Last Mountain Lake north of Regina, where Mr. Bird was taking pictures of a pelican colony nesting on a gravelly sandbar half a mile from shore. A sudden windstorm lashed the water during the night and washed over the lower part of the bar and destroyed about 25 pelican nests with newly hatched young, a number of grebe nests, common terns and several ducks' nests.

Among "human hazards" encountered this spring by Mr. Bird were "results of misguided individuals whose rifle-sighting eyes were keener than their wits. Four of our Swainson hawk families were wiped out by the demise of parent birds as they sat confidently on roadside telephone poles." Mr. Bird noticed the five defunct Swainson hawks, each killed by a .22 rifle bullet, decorating a fence. He reports that he took the birds off the barbed wires and hid them, with shame, in the grasses by the road,

A final tragedy is told of a large hole in a corner fence post where Flickers have nested for the past five years, and wherein Mother Flicker had hatched out her usual eight which Mr. Bird hoped to band. Some sadistic individual ("I'd like to find him!" vows Mr. Bird) "went to a great deal of trouble to find a stick of the right shape and length to poke down inside the hole to kill the young...The weapon remained in the nest."

FIELD-CHECKING LIST OF SASKATCHEWAN BIRDS

This list is printed on both sides of stiff card, and is creased for folding, after which it becomes a handy 4-page list, 3½" x 6", which will fit in any average size pocket.

It has been compiled from "Birds of Saskatchewan" by H. Hedley Mitchell (Canadian Field-Naturalist, XXXVIII, 1924, pp. 101-118 and "Saskatchewan Bird Records Made Since the Publication of Mitchell's 'Birds of Saskatchewan'" by Laurence B. Potter (Blue Jay, I, 1943, p. 25). It lists 294 species that have been definitely identified including five introduced species. In addition, 14 species marked (?) are inserted that have been reported but whose status is still doubtful. Twelve additional races (subspecies) have been listed as being possibly recognizable in the field. The names are based upon the official A.O.U. List, and those used in "Birds of Canada."

Abbreviations are used to indicate species to be expected only in the far north, and those considered to be rare, or that only occur as stragglers. There is a space beside each species, where the number of individuals seen, or the relative abundance of the species, may be noted. Allowance has also been made for listing the Date, Locality, Weather, Time, Observers, etc.

We believe that these cards provide the quickest, easiest and most accurate method of keeping bird records. We suggest that members fill out a card for each bird hike, and also keep one "master card" for the season, with first-seen dates for all species on it. The latter, or a copy of it, could then be sent in to the Editor of the "Blue Jay" at the end of each season.

These cards will be found to have many uses. As they list every species noted in the province, they provide a quick method of ascertaining whether any particular species has been noted here before. Bird banders will find it an easy way to let fellow banders know how many species and individuals they have banded.

Two sample copies of this list are being sent to every member of the Y.N.H.S., resident in Saskatchewan. We, in turn, ask that each member return one card to us, after having denoted, by abbreviations, the relative abundance of each species in his or her district. In this way, we should gather a fairly good idea of the distribution and abundance of each species in the province, after which we can gain further information by direct inquiry, or through the pages of the "Blue Jay."

Further copies of the List will be available from the secretary, at .25¢ per dozen cards.

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We should like to remind members that fees for the coming season are now due. Will members please bring our Society and the "Blue Jay" to the attention of others interested in our native wildlife. Our membership is not nearly as large as it could and should be. Dues for the coming year (50¢) should be sent to the Secretary, Miss Pauline Summers, 34 sixth avenue, Yorkton.

BIRD NOTES
by Maurice G. Street,

Black-crowned Night Heron. Last year the colony, numbering 21 nests, nested amongst bulrushes, in 15 to 20 inches of water on Lower Rousay Lake. This year, when the water level of the lake rose nearly two feet, they returned to nest in the bush on an island in Upper Rousay Lake, a few miles away from where they had nested in 1944. At that time there were 26 nests. This year there were 15 nests and they built in chokecherry bushes rather than in willows and poplar as formerly. Unless there is a new colony starting up somewhere in the district, this species would seem to be decreasing in numbers.

Canada Goose. Nest with 6 eggs found on an island at Upper Rousay Lake, June 22, 1947, by C. Stuart Houston. Last year, two nests at this lake, and three at the Rokeby Marsh, all hatched out between May 14 and 17. Another goose with goslings was reported at Upper Rousay Lake before the end of May, so it is believed this late record is a re-nesting, the first nest having been flooded out.

Mallard. The magpie nest, 12 ft. from the ground in willows, 3 miles south of Yorkton, which was occupied by a Mallard last year, was apparently occupied by the same bird this year, and again she was successful in raising a brood. Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw visited this nest and took photos when he visited Yorkton on his way north in search of nests of the Whooping Cranes.

Another female of this species was found nesting in a black poplar, some 18 feet from the ground, at the "Muskeg" just on the edge of Yorkton. This nest contained 8 eggs on June 10, 1947, but had been discovered by some young boys about three weeks previously. All 8 eggs hatched.

White-winged Scoter. This species have been gradually increasing at York Lake since Ducks Unlimited raised the water level in 1943. On July 13, 1947, 46 were noted in one flock. C. S. Houston.

Spruce Grouse. A nest with 9 eggs was found by an employee of the Dept. of Natural Resources at Fishing Lake, some 60 miles north-west of Niwawin, quite by accident when walking along a narrow road - a stick picked up from the road and aimlessly thrown to one side flushed the female from the nest at the base of a small spruce. Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw, when in this area, was shown the nest, which he spent some time in observing. Arriving at the nest site before daylight, June 3, 1947, he found the female off the nest and after a few minutes she returned, flying directly to the nest. The female, then, did not once leave the eggs for the next eight hours, at which time Dr. Walkinshaw was forced to return to his camp.

Burrowing Owl. Nest with five young found in a burrow just across the fence, in an oat field, along Highway 15, 3 miles east of Melville, July 9, 1947, by C.S. Houston. The young were of different sizes, apparently there was a day or two difference in age between each; the eldest being nearly full-grown.

White-winged Crossbill An adult female, picked up dead on the Old Victoria School Grounds, Yorkton, June 7, 1947. The specimen was forwarded to the Provincial Museum. It was the second Yorkton record for this species.

Common Tern. Two noted at York Lake, July 13, 1947, by C. S. Houston. This species is ordinarily noted only in spring and fall migration at Yorkton.

Wilson's Phalarope. What is apparently a northern nesting record of this species was established June 1, 1947, when a nest, containing three eggs, was found some 9 miles north-west of Love, Sask., by a party consisting of Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw, M. G. Street, Billy and Walter Matthews. Several females were also seen about the same slough, which indicates there were probably more nests, as the only male seen was the one flushed from the nest which was found.

Pine Siskin. This species has been very abundant throughout Saskatchewan this spring and summer. Roy Crawford, Saskatoon, reports numbers in the city during migration. Steve Waycheshen, reports them very numerous at High Hill, Sask., while at Nipawin, flocks numbering into the hundreds have been seen since early May. Dave A. Munro, Okanagan Landing, B. C., noted a female gathering nesting material, 11 miles west of Nipawin in early June. Young, just out of the nest, were seen being fed by the parents at Nipawin, July 12, 1947, and other young were noted quite commonly after July 18.

J. F. Roy, Tullis, Sask., noting the Siskins at Tullis writes, "Pine Siskins have been unusually abundant this year and are still being seen in small flocks, July 19. They were first noted in late April and have been more or less regularly seen ever since. They are very occasional here most years."

35 birds were noted on C. Stuart Houston's front lawn August 3, and C. C. Shaw noted a flock of the same size, one block away, five days later.

Cooper's Hawk. A nest with three eggs, discovered by members of the Y.N.H.S., at the Muskeg, on the west side of Yorkton, June 10, 1947. This nest was about 22 ft. from the ground in a poplar. Misfortune befell one of the eggs, as there were only two young birds on July 11, when Stuart Houston banded them.

Black-billed Cuckoo. Wm. Niven reports this species quite common around Sheho until 1944, then was entirely absent during 1945 and 1946. This year he has only one record - one heard on June 27.

Tree Sparrow. Indicative of the general lateness of migration this past spring, 1947, this species was still present at Sheho until the middle of June, so reports Wm. Niven.

Hawks. A heavy flight of migrating hawks occurred at Yorkton, on Thursday, April 17, 1947, between 2:00 and 3:30 p.m. 117 were counted by Cliff Shaw. Due to the great height at which these hawks flew, all could not be identified, but the majority appeared to be Red-Tails.

BIRD NOTES - Continued

"To see a flock of wild Canada geese fly over your head, between the barn and the house and alight on your own pond is really a thrill," so remarks Ralph P. Stueck, who has a small museum and bird sanctuary at Abernethy, Saskatchewan. Two flocks visited the Stueck Sanctuary last fall, 1946, and mingled with his domesticated Canadas. Two mated pair of the wild Canadas remained all winter, to nest this summer under the protection this small sanctuary affords. Photos sent to us by Mr. Stueck showing the Canadas nesting, the young and the adults about the yard is most interesting, and clearly shows what can be done with a few acres of waste land and a will to protect the birds. Mr. Stueck will welcome anyone, that is interested, to visit his sanctuary at Abernethy.

An interesting record of a crow that nested on the ground at Abernethy, Sask., comes from Mr. Ralph P. Stueck, who found the nest during the summer of 1946. The nest was situated on a ridge along a fence, and was built chiefly of long straw and bits of bark off of fence pickets, and lined with "fox-tail grass." This crow raised a brood of five, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the nearest willows that could have supported a nest. The nearest crow neighbor, nesting in the conventional manner, lived one mile away.

Sharp-tailed Grouse. C. R. Coates, Birsay, Sask., reports an Albino grouse of this species, near the Saskatchewan River, in January, 1947.

English Sparrow. On May 18, 1943, M. G. Street, Nipawin, Sask., noted a female feeding fledgling young within one block of the main business section of Nipawin. This sparrow, while acting in true sparrow fashion was easily identified thereafter by its nearly pure white wings; only the longest primary or two were brown. Within the one block area, where first noted, this female was known to have reared at least 8 or more broods; by years as follows: 1943, 2 broods; 1944, 1 brood; 1945, 2 broods and one other attempted nesting; 1946, 2 broods; 1947, up until July, one brood. During this period, the bird being now at least 5 years, was seen almost daily summer and winter in the same section of Nipawin. Only on two occasions, March 24, 1945, and March 10, 1946, was this bird known to have left its home area; when it was seen nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile distant near the grain elevators. Only two individuals, of the broods reared, showed any tendency toward albinism. One of these had a large amount of white in the feathers of its back and was seen being fed by the white-winged parent in early May, 1944. The other young, noted August 5, 1946, was almost a replica of the female parent; white wings, but in addition had several white tail feathers and a general grayness in the over-all plumage. This latter young was trapped in a trap used in catching birds for banding, but despite the fact that numerous types of traps were in operation from 1945 on, the white-winged adult female was never taken and as this is written is still being seen, and still appears in the best of health.

Red-breasted Merganser. One pair noted on a small prairie slough, near Tullis, Sask., May 6, 1947, by J. F. Roy.

Solitary Sandpiper. Noted at Waskesiu, by J. F. Roy, who writes: "There were 3 downy young as well as two adults along the lake shore near a river estuary. The old bird flew to the lower limb of an aspen and "harped" at me while I caught one of the little fellows in my hand. When we first came across the Sandpipers, I thought they were the Spotted Sandpipers, so common along the river at Tullis, but a glimpse of their wings and tail, told me that here was something definitely more interesting. Those are the little pleasures in birding that make it so rewarding."

Information is requested from all members concerning the relative abundance of waterfowl in their district. In the Yorkton area sloughs are plentiful, and Pintails, Mallards, Blue-winged Teal and Shovellers are much in evidence. The lakes seem to hold a much lower breeding population than they have during the past few years, however, and the diving ducks are only present in fractions of their former numbers. Redheads have shown the sharpest drop, followed by Canvasbacks and Lesser Scaup. Ruddy Ducks seem present in almost their usual numbers. At Tullis, Sask., information supplied by J. F. Roy, indicates a similar loss among the diving ducks. "Duck populations decreased sharply in 1946 and this year the decrease was again marked over 1946. A couple of large sloughs in the region that normally support hundreds of pair of nesting ducks can boast of only 20 to 50 breeding pair. Canvasbacks are the ducks suffering the greatest loss in numbers. Coteau Lake, a large slough, which in 1943 supported at least 25 pairs of Canvasbacks this year have only 3 or 4 pairs. Of considerable interest is the way the Shovellers have maintained, or even increased, in numbers in the past few years in this area, so writes Mr. Roy. Ducks Unlimited report an increase in duck breeding population in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, with a decrease in Manitoba and the northern prairies.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN (Pinnated Grouse.) Three birds of this species were noted by W. D. Lightbody, in early November 1946, on the grassy flats between Otthon and Rousay Lake. This species appears to be steadily decreasing, for it disappeared from much of the Yorkton District, 15 to 20 years ago. Local sportsmen, well acquainted with this species, report that it was noted occasionally though in decreasing numbers on the Saltcoats and Otthon Flats up until about four years ago. At Nipawin, the Pinnated Grouse is of only a rare occurrence, so it was something of a record when J. P. Maywood, while doing field work on his farm, 4 miles SW of Nipawin, June 22, 1947, accidentally ran over a nest of this species, containing 14 eggs. Oddly enough, none of the eggs were broken, so Mr. Maywood moved the entire nest some 5 or 6 ft. to new cover, to which the female immediately returned and succeeded in hatching all of the 14 eggs. On July 18, M. G. Street was fortunate in flushing a female with 7 young about one mile north of the site where Mr. Maywood found the nest.

J. Francis Roy, Tullis, Sask., reports that Vesper Sparrows and Chestnut collared longspurs are definitely scarcer in his district this year. Does this apply to any other part of the Province?

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It would be greatly appreciated if our members would send in their reports more regularly. The "Blue Jay" depends on your observations.

BOTANY

By L. T. Carmichael

Reports from various parts of the province, show that the Red Lily is much more prevalent than usual. Perhaps if favorable seasons continue we will have them back again in profusion. Mr. Cliff Shaw writes that in the Yorkton area there are a dozen this year for every one that bloomed last summer. Hundreds of them bloomed in a meadow not over ten miles from Regina. The same is true in other meadows at various parts, where they have not been seen in large numbers for some time.

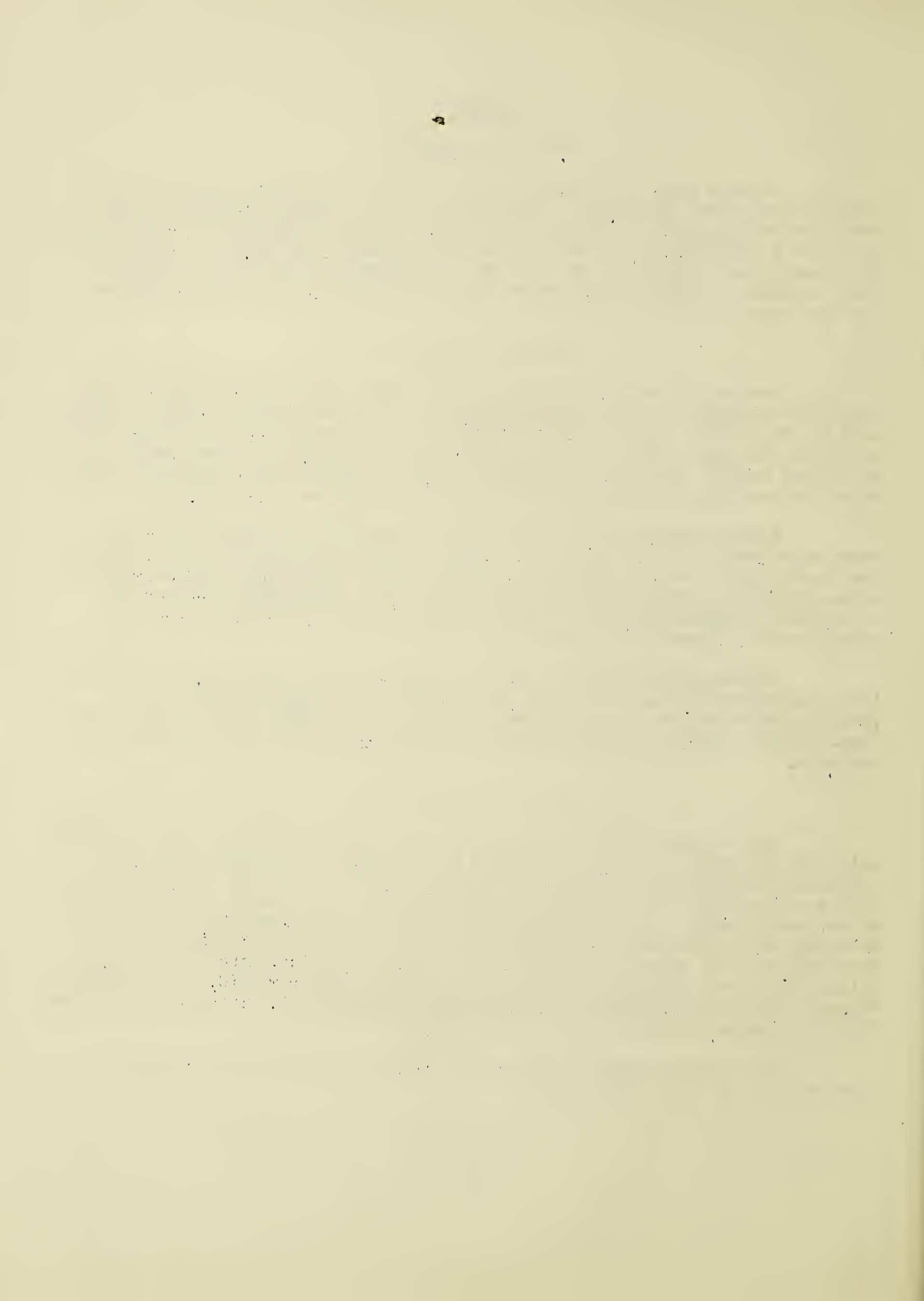
Perhaps the weather has been hard on mice, and has in particular disturbed the hoarding habits of Microtus Miner. A most interesting article dealing with the destructive effects of these mice on lily bulbs and crocus corms appears in the May and June edition of The Canadian Field Naturalist. It was written by Mr. Stuart Criddle of Aweme, Treosbank, Manitoba, and like other articles of his, shows how carefully and scientifically his investigations are conducted.

From a lily patch he traced the main runway of the mice, until some sixty yards away he found their nest chamber, and near by, and connected with it, the store room. Here he found the following: "1176 Lily bulbs, 678 wild onion bulbs, 583 pieces of the rhizomes of wild sunflower, 417 bulbs and pieces of the taproot of pasque-flower, a few bits each of juniperus horizontalis (red cedar) avens, sagebrush and prairie clover."

Investigations such as this are of the greatest value and Mr. Criddle is to be highly commended. It clearly shows how the red lily, wild onion and prairie anemone may be greatly reduced in numbers in a short space of time. The facts indicate another justification for the preservation of our predator hawks and owls,

In the last edition of the "Blue Jay" we gave a list of flower specimens which, we believed, are not now recorded in the Saskatchewan University List. Unfortunately, in error, a number of plants from a Waterton Lake collection of 1940 were included. This was quickly and diplomatically brought to our attention by Mr. Archie Budd, of the Swift Current Experimental Station, and by Mr. A. J. Breitung, who is now with the Division of Botany at the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa. The plants in question are: Heuchera clindrica, Heuchera Glabra, Yellow Hedysarum, Cranebill Geranium. Water Willow Herb, Caraway (C. Gairdueri). Prince's Pine, Red Wintergreen, Scorpion Weed, Beard-tongue (P. Fruticosus) Yellow Rattle, Wormwood (A. Mac. Callae) and Self-heal.

The work done by Mr. Budd and Mr. Breitung in checking the complete list has been greatly appreciated.



CATALOGUE OF THE VASCULAR PLANTS OF CENTRAL EASTERN SASKATCHEWAN
(Canadian Field-Naturalist Vol. 61, pp.71-100
May-June, 1947.)

To the Saskatchewan Botanist the most interesting edition of the "Canadian Field-Naturalist" to appear in recent years is the 1947 May-June Edition. Almost the entire volume is devoted to a catalogue of the vascular plants of Central Eastern Saskatchewan, collected and classified by Mr. August J. Breitung, now Assistant Botanist at the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa.

This list, is the result of many years of keen interest and hard work on the part of the author, whose early life was profitably spent in the heart of the area he loves so much and knows so well.

August Breitung was different from other boys in his community. On days off, when they were playing ball, or fishing or dancing, or congregating around the village pool room, he was wandering in the forests, along the streams and across the rich meadows looking for flowers--happy in the anticipation of finding something new.

Many a time have I seen him with his bicycle and plant press striking out along the roads which lead from Mackay, Sylvania, Tisdale, Codette, Nipawin, Eldersley, Hudson Bay Junction, Rose Valley and all the country between was his happy hunting ground.

What a wonderful area for a Botanist; the envy of those who struggle to learn the plants of the West and have only the open prairie and a few coulees and valleys in which to find them. Here various and distinctive habitats are a feature of the country. The rich forests of white spruce along the Carrot, the Red Deer and the Saskatchewan rivers; the sphagnum bogs with their black spruce, tamarack and characteristic flora; the jack pine forests of the sand ridges; large areas of lovely deciduous forests; the Porcupine Mountains and Pasquia Hills, which rise to a height of 2,500 feet; bluffy lands of semi-open prairie as well as true prairie; wheat lands which stretch for miles and miles, and scattered throughout numerous green meadows, streams, marshlands and lakes.

Of these 16,000 square miles which comprise the area under survey, grow a great majority of the wild plants of this Province--and Mr. Breitung has found the most of them.

In the early days, hundreds of specimens were sent to Ottawa and to the Herbarium at the University of Saskatchewan for checking and determination. It was not long before the University recognized the splendid work he was doing and gratefully acknowledged assistance given by him in the preparation of their list of our wild flowers. Great credit is due to a man who practically alone and unassisted, without any special academic or University training, with only the love of nature to urge him on and a dogged determination to win, has made a success. August Breitung is going places. The "Blue Jay" adds its congratulations.

Lloyd T. Carmichael.

An added attraction in the Provincial Museum, this year, is the weekly display of living wild flowers. Each Saturday these were collected and transplanted to large low flower pots, by Mr. L. T. Carmichael. Many remain in perfect condition for the entire week. Next white cards indicated the names, habitat, etc. The first collection was shown May 4, and during the next twelve weeks over one hundred and fifty flowers have been brought in. The Museum car had been made available each week end. Many pleasing comments were made concerning this splendid service, so willingly given by Mr. Carmichael.

FRED G. BARD

HERBARIUM --- Prov. Museum, Regina

Through the Dominion Experimental Station at Swift Current, the Museum has received a Herbarium. These 530 specimens are identified and mounted and come to Museum, through the interest and courtesy of E. W. Tisdale in charge, Grassland Research Lab. and Mr. A. C. Budd, Curator of Herbarium. Our special thanks go out to these men for this splendid contribution. It is our intention to house these specimens suitably to make it possible for students for reference and study.

The Museum is anxious to render further services of this nature. However, until provisions are made whereby reasonable care can be taken of such specimens and space to provide these services, then they must remain packed away and such projects kept in mind.

NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF EMMA LAKE, Saskatchewan.
(Canadian Field-Naturalist, Vol. 61, pp.105-115,
May-June, 1947)

This is an excellent list, recording the status of 156 species of birds noted by Farley M. Mowat, at Emma Lake, Sask., from June 26 to July 22, 1939, and on other visits to the area in 1936 and 1937. The list as the author says in his introduction, "may be said to comprise the bulk of the resident species which are normally to be expected, but does not include many species which are normally only encountered in migration."

Probably the most interesting record is that of one male Wood Duck in full plumage, accompanied by three females of this species, observed flying up a small stream near Emma Lake on July 6, 1939. A further record was secured by a local hunter who shot a male Wood Duck in the autumn of 1938 and had it identified by the local game guardian! The author states that "The species cannot be considered accidental and is probably a well-distributed, if rare, summer resident through the Lower Canadian Zone".

Mr. Mowat's list comprises a most welcome addition to our knowledge of Saskatchewan avifauna.

The Yorkton Natural History Society has obtained a number of copies of the May-June, 1947, issue of the Canadian Field-Naturalist, containing both lists, by Mr. Breitung and Mr. Mowat, as reviewed on this page.

Copies are available at .50¢ apiece from Miss Pauline Summers, Secretary, Yorkton Natural History Society, 34 Sixth Ave., Yorkton, Sask.

WILD BEES

By J.D. Ritchie

Numerous volumes have been written about bees yet still much remains to be discovered of even the most common species. In a letter from Dr. Linsley, one of the greatest authorities on bees of North America, he states, "Although we know there are thousands of species of bees in North America, very little is known about the habits of more than one hundred or so of these."

Here is a field of investigation wide open to the young naturalist, who, if he studies the wild bees, is almost certain to discover something that no one has ever previously recorded and which may be of the utmost value to a fascinating study, the science of Entomology.

There is much yet to be learned about even the common bumble-bees, those big fellows found in every field and garden in the country. The clumsy bumble-bee Bombus is everyone's friend. When we were youngsters in Ontario we imprisoned her in ink bottles and made her sing to us. She brings back memories of happy hours, long purple prickly bull-thistles, roadsides golden with dandelions and buttercups, fields of sweet-smelling clover blossoms, which without her help in cross-fertilization, would produce very little seed.

Although bees as a rule are very industrious, still there are loafers to be found in the family. The drones or males, of all bees, never so far as is known, do any work and in certain species where both sexes are alike idle they are dependent on the exertions of other species of bees. These lazy species are known as guest bees or "inquilines". These inquilines are entertained by both solitary bees and by social bees, who act willingly or unwillingly as hosts.

The genus Psithyrus is a guest-bee that infests the nests of bumble-bees. The puzzling thing about these guest-bees is that they are apparently welcome guests and so far it has not yet been proven that they are of any use whatever to the colony. They so closely resemble the bumble-bees in appearance that it is difficult to determine whether a male is a psithyrus or a bombus. Nevertheless the females are easily distinguished for through disuse they have lost the pollen basket of the hind legs. It cannot be supposed that the guests are mistaken for members of the family and some naturalists believe that these aristocratic guests are important in some way to the prosperity of the whole family, but of what importance no one has as yet the slightest hint.

There are many families of bees and remarkable differences exist among them. Most of them are solitary species. Some are miners and dig in the ground. Some are masons and make their nests of mortar-like mud which they attach to such places as stones. Some are carpenters and bore tunnels in solid and rotten wood or enlarge the tunnels of wood-boring larvae. Others excavate the pith from such places as raspberry stems, while others are leaf-cutters lining their nests with leaves or petals of flowers. I found one of these last summer in the dry dead stalk of a cow parsnip plant and perhaps you have found the cells of these in the tunnels of wood-boring larvae when splitting a block of stove wood.

If you have never studied bees before you will be amazed at their great numbers and various colors. Some of them are small iridescent living gems and visit only certain flowers. You can watch the bees any bright sunny summer day when you step out of doors. Many species abound wherever flowers grow and they have been studied from earliest times. A friend, who in the

summer of 1944 was with the Porsild Biological expeditions in the Yukon, beyond the Arctic circle, tells me that there are many species of bees even in that far northern district.

If you are interested in learning more about the life and habits of bees you should read Maeterlinck's "Life of the Bee" and "The Golden Throng" by Edwin Way Teale. Both are classic among the many volumes which have been written about these interesting creatures.

GENERAL NOTES

Mrs. F. Bilsbury, of Grenfell, in a letter dated June 26, reports: "There is not one common gopher (Richardson's ground squirrel), or grey bush gopher (Franklin's ground squirrel), or striped gopher to be seen. I have only seen one chipmunk this summer. A year ago pocket gophers were thick; now there is not one. We believe that through the heavy snow and increase in water, many of these animals either were drowned out or fled.

There has been a great increase in the number of frogs in the Grenfell district this summer, but no toads have been seen."

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A Devils lake Tiger Salamander was found in a Yorkton garden, August 9, 1947, by two of our junior members, Nathaniel Olson and Edward Burski.

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A fossilized shellfish was unearthed by Yorkton city workmen, August 18, 1947, while digging a trench on Fourth Avenue. The fossil was in an excellent state of preservation, having been encased in an ironstone concretion. The fossil is known as a baculite, one of the straight shelled cephalopods, which are represented in existing faunas by two groups, one including such animals as squids and cuttlefishes, and the octopus, the other comprising the solitary genus Nautilus. The fossil is five inches in length and one inch in diameter. It has been given by the finder, Mr. Alfred Guppy, to the city for the future Yorkton museum.

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It is with much regret that we report the death of Mr. John A. Gunn of Good Spirit Lake, who died at Fort Qu'Appelle Sanatorium on August 12. Born near Fort Qu'Appelle in August, 1883, he settled with his parents at Good Spirit Lake (known locally as Devil's Lake) in 1888. A veteran of both the Boer and First World Wars, he was a storekeeper and postmaster at Spirit Lake P.O. Mr. Gunn was a member of the Yorkton Natural History Society from its inception. He was a keen observer of nature and furnished the "Blue Jay" with many reports on the wildlife of his district. His passing will be deeply felt by all who knew him.

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Members will note that this issue of the "Blue Jay" combines both the April-May-June and the July-August-September issues. (Volume 5, Nos. 3 & 4). We sincerely regret having to follow such a policy, but we saw no other way of bringing Volume 5 to a close before the commencement of our next fiscal year. We have been one issue behind ever since Mrs. Friestly's unexpected death over one year ago, and we have finally had to give up the hopes we once entertained of catching up to date. This past year has not been an easy one for the Editors of the "Blue Jay"; however, difficulties have been overcome one by one, and we are now set for a fresh start this coming year. We trust that the fact that this issue is slightly larger than usual will help to compensate for the issue missed.

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We ask that members let us have reports on their recent observations, so that we may get Volume 6 of the "Blue Jay" off to a good start.

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